

Title of Research

**STYLISTICS ANALYSIS OF WILLIAM BLAKE'S POEM: "POISON TREE"**

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### Abstract

In this assignment, stylistics techniques and methods are used for the stylistic analysis of W. Blake's poem 'Poison Tree'. This analysis is helpful in understanding the basic concept of poem that is the contrast between the harmony of the nature and disharmony of the mankind. Man is always eager to take revenge from the side of his offensives. Perhaps this is a divine virtue and bestowed him by God who firstly created his creature and later on takes revenge because of their wrong doings.



**POEM'S ANALYSIS**  
**A POISON TREE**

I was **angry** (stress) with my friend; (a)  
 I told my wrath, my wrath did end. (a)  
 I was **angry** (stress) with my foe: (b)  
 I told it not, my wrath did grow. (b)

And I **watered** (stress) it in fears,  
 Night & **morning** (stress) with my tears:  
 And I sunned it with smiles,  
 And with **soft** (stress) deceitful (stress) wiles. (pretend to be normal)

And it grew both **day and night** (stress).  
 Till it bore and **apple** (stress) bright. (product of anger)  
 And my foe **beheld** (stress) it shine,  
 And he knew that it was mine.

And into my **garden** (stress) **stole**, (thief)  
 When the night had veild the pole;  
 In the **morning** (stress) **glad** I see; (early, happiness)  
 My foe **outstretched** (stress) beneath the tree. (dead)

**My analysis is made under the aspects of**

- Subconscious anger built a trap
- Pragmatic level
- Discourse stylistics analysis
- Textualism & Contextualism
- Phonetic level
- Four quatrains
- Rhyming couplets
- End stopped lines
- Alternating rhythm  
(trochaic trimeter and iambic tetrameter)

**INTRODUCTION**

• **SUBCONSCIOUS LEVEL BUILT A TRAP:**

It is a **discourse** in which speaker shares his experience with the reader... here is an evolution of his emotion from positivity to negativity like his anger converts into **Wrath**. It wasn't apple that poisonous but tree which pours his poison into its fruit, just like it was not the anger of poet that was destructive but the sever feelings of his heart those made his anger destructive.

• **PRAGMATICAL LEVEL**

The poison tree is the central metaphor as it is not actually referring to a tree but the narrator's anger which can '**grow day and night**' (24/7, always). This is a personification as although a tree can grow, anger can't; this just refers to the narrator's anger becoming stronger. The narrator watering the tree in fears, a tree can be watered to help it grow but this refers to the reader helping his fear to grow stronger; hinting at his unfolding scheme against his foe for getting revenge.

- **1<sup>st</sup> stanza:**

He don't let himself to angry with his friend because whenever creates any misunderstanding, he simply shares it with his friend and the ambiguity soon becomes clear. But opposite idea in 2<sup>nd</sup> line, he allowed himself to get angry with his foe, and therefore, his wrath did grow, works like an apple seed falling onto fertile soil, the speaker repressed anger germinates and becomes the one obsession in his life.

- **2<sup>nd</sup> stanza:**

The speaker says, he '**sunned it with smiles**' and '**with soft, deceitful wiles**', means he is creating an illusion with his enemy and pretending to be friendly to seduce and bring him closer. But under this deception he **watered** it in **fears**, Night & **morning** with my **tears**, here is an indication of manipulation of emotions like scared, sad, and happy.

- **3<sup>rd</sup> stanza:**

'**and it grew, apple bright**', anger grows into a tempting thing—apple bright. His foe believes it shines which means he thinks it's true and means something and takes his illusion seriously. '**and he knew it was mine**', suggests that he really thinks speaker is his friend. Here crafty speaker brags about **reading his foe's mind**, implying the ease with which he could fool his enemy's trust.

- **4<sup>th</sup> stanza:**

In last two lines, foe consumed his poisonous apple and died, this sight makes him glad. So anger leads him to **self-destruction**.

- **Discourse Stylistics Analysis:**

The death of foe which the speaker is glad to see, doesn't spiritually affect the foe but only harms him physically hence, the anger was **spiritual** not **physical**. The speaker becomes the serpent that tempted Eve, capitalizing on and exploiting the Deadly Sin of Envy by allowing his foe to '**behold its shine**'.

As for title is concerned the use of the word '**A**' instead of '**The**' is significant, the tree can only refer to one tree and can't be any other tree but '**a tree**' can be any tree. This is to imply that what happened to the narrator can be happened to anybody and is not just his own experience.

- **Supposed Allusion:**

Speaker – God

The foe – Adam, Eve

Garden – Garden of Eden

Tree – tree of forbidden knowledge

Fruit -- destruction

In Genesis, God tells Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of this tree but they disobey Him. Eating from this tree is the first sin, and as a result, death, pain, destruction, evil passions and everything that sucks—enters the world.

If this analysis is true with the reference of God it shows that He rejoicing in killing his enemies just like the speaker of this poem which most people think the God they know would never do so.

Blake's analogy may be ruthless and insensitive, but he does get the reader thinking. He suggests that God fed his wrath and anger into the tree and intended for man to eat from it...! If so, **HE** is creating a world doomed to **HIS** wrath and anger (an idea just about anybody would shutter at).

- **CONTEXTUALISM:**

W. Blake was an English Dissenter who broke away from 'Anglican Church'. Dissenter believed that the policies of the 'Anglican Church' were wrong and so opposed it. 'Songs of Experience' are to protest the Anglican Church's policy of stifling 'sinful' emotions in people, such as anger.

- **PHONETIC LEVEL:**

The poem is written in the past tense and simple structure. The poem is comprised of four quatrains each one with the rhyme scheme of 'AABB'. This means that for each stanza the first two lines rhyme and the last two lines rhyme is same. This links up two lines and better expresses the meaning. **A nursery rhyme – Sea level...** When lines are repeated in the same way again and again, this is called ANAPHORA.

The poem is also written in **iambic tetrameter** which means that each line has four feet of an unstressed and stressed syllable making eight syllables in total: '**I told my wrath, my wrath did**

**end**'. As shown, every 2<sup>nd</sup> syllable is stressed which adds a certain flow to it and is easier to read and understand.

The story of the narrator is also told mainly in '**TWO LINES BLOCKS**'. Such as the first two: 'I was angry with my friend; I told my wrath, my wrath did end'. The second line explains the first.

In the first stanza many of the words are '**monosyllables**' except for the word '**angry**' which is repeated twice to emphasize emotion and to contrast with the two different ways the speaker deals with this emotion.

All the lines in the first stanza start with '**I**' which emphasizes that this is a personal story told from an individual point of view. Seven of the other '**12**' lines in the poem start with '**and**' which helps the story to build and increase in intensity. The use of '**and**' particularly resembles that of a child telling a story.

- **Reference:**

Blake decided to call the original draft of a '**POISON TREE**, from '**CHRISTIAN FOREBEARANCE**' (self-control).

- **Metaphor:**

'Till it bore an apple bright', the apple is a **metaphor** for the '**fruit**' of his grudge.

- **Irony:**

The foe was outstretched beneath the tree of hatred.

- **Repetition:**

'I was angry with my friend—I was angry with my foe'.  
Word "**I**"... and word "**and**"...

- **Alliteration:**

Wrath-wrath, Sunned-smiles, Friend-foe, and Bore-bright

- **Contrast:**

Friend-foe, End-grow, Night-morning, Smile-wile, and Tear-smile

- **Consonants:**

Wrath-wrath, shine-mine, stole-pole, friend-end, fears-tears, smile-vile, and night-bright

- **Assonance:**

Friend-end, fear-tear, sunned-smile-wile, night-bright, shine-mine, stole-pole, wrath-wrath, and see-tree

Initial consonant cluster	Medial consonant cluster	Final consonant cluster
<b><u>W</u>rath</b>	Ang <b><u>r</u></b> y	Friend <b><u>d</u></b>
<b><u>F</u>riend</b>	Sun <b><u>n</u></b> ned	Wrath <b><u>h</u></b>
<b><u>G</u>row</b>	Deceit <b><u>t</u></b> ful	End <b><u>d</u></b>
<b><u>S</u>mile</b>	App <b><u>p</u></b> le	Water <b><u>r</u></b> d
<b><u>G</u>rew</b>	Gard <b><u>d</u></b> en	Fears <b><u>s</u></b>
<b><u>B</u>right</b>	Morn <b><u>n</u></b> ing	Night <b><u>t</u></b>
<b><u>S</u>hine</b>	Out <b><u>st</u></b> retched	Morn <b><u>n</u></b> ing
<b><u>K</u>new</b>		Tears <b><u>s</u></b>
<b><u>S</u>tole</b>		Soft <b><u>t</u></b>
<b><u>G</u>lad</b>		Bright <b><u>t</u></b>
		Beheld <b><u>d</u></b>
		Veild <b><u>d</u></b>
		beneath <b><u>h</u></b>

- **Monosyllables:**

Friend – [frend], Wrath – [rath, rahth], Grow – [groh], Fear – [feer], Tear – [teer], Night – [nahyt], Sunned – [suhn], Smile – [smahyl], Soft – [sawft, soft], Wile – [wahyl], Bore – [bawr, bohr], Bright – [brahyt], Shine – [shahyn], Mine – [mahyn], Knew – [noo, nyoo], Stole – [stohl], Glad – [glad], Pole – [pohl], Foe – [foh], Tree – [tree]

- **Two Syllables:**

Angry – [ang-gree], Water – [waw-terd, wot-erd], Morning – [morn-ing], Apple – [ap.ple, ap-uhl], Beheld – [be-held, bih-held], Garden – [gar-den, dahr-dn], Outstretch – [out-stretch, out-strech]

- **Three Syllables:**



Deceitful – [de.ceit.ful, dih.seet.fuhl]

But it also looks like me the tree of **SALVATION**



The very same tree which provide judgment to Christ or the tree of Crucification on which Jesus Christ was crucified because the very same tree was also consumed by the anger and wrath of the people who seemed jealous from Christ, crucified him just for self-made reasons.